

An underwater photograph of a diver swimming through a narrow passage between dark, rocky coral reefs. Sunlight filters through the water from above, creating a bright, ethereal glow. Several small fish are visible in the water. The overall color palette is dominated by deep blues and blacks, with a bright white light source at the top.

# LATENT PARTNERS

Isaac Bohulu



LATENT  
PARTNERS

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Isaac Bohulu

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## Dedication

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**To:**

*Present and future  
generations of people  
whose livelihoods depend, largely,  
on the output of the state*

## LATENT PARTNERS

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“When did we celebrate Ghana’s 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary, my son?” Grandpa asked, soon after I had taken my seat.

“Ghana@50? Let’s see; erm....I think that was in the year 2007. Grandpa, Ghana@50 was a great time.”

“I agree, my son; even though there were some partisan undercurrents, our 50<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary was a national hit.”

“It certainly was, Grandpa. I was especially fascinated by the celebration on March 6.”

“Yes, that was the culminating event, and it was pretty exciting.”

“Grandpa, that event on March 6 took the whole nation by storm; people travelled from all over the country to the capital for the celebration”

“True, and I was especially excited about how our people dressed up for the occasion; did you notice that, my son?”

“I couldn’t have missed that, Grandpa. Almost everybody was dressed in the national colours. The variety of dresses and the fashion on display were very uplifting.”

“My son, what Ghana@50 achieved was an awakening of national pride. For once, the national flag appeared everywhere.”

“Grandpa, I was at the Independence Square and, it was spectacular”

“I watched the celebration on TV, and you know what happened soon after? I wrote a poem.”

“You did, Grandpa?”

“I did, my son; here it is, take a look at where the marker is,” Grandpa said, passing the small notebook to me.

I took the notebook from him and turned to the page he had indicated. His poem was titled:

“Ghana@50: A Missed Opportunity”. I cast a glance at Grandpa and, after receiving the signal to read, began reading the poem to his hearing:

**“GHANA@50: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY**

*"I have been young, and now I am old;  
Yet I have not seen the Ghana Flag  
Adorn Ghanaians, as during  
The Jubilee Independence Anniversary*

*In their numbers they came;  
The Ghana Flag they waved.  
In various fashions, they appeared  
Red, gold, green, with the black star  
Fashioned into various dresses and styles*

*The British Flag vanished;  
The American Flag disappeared;  
Replaced by the Flag of Ghana  
In taxis, tro-tros, and private cars.  
Alas, the Ghana Flag has returned  
To its glory, to be loved and admired*

*This new love for the Flag;  
This new love for the Land,  
I said to myself;  
I mused in my soul:  
What a huge opportunity it presents  
To challenge the Sons and Daughters  
To develop new attitudes for excellence*

*Yet as they came, they went;  
In their old mindsets, they went.  
Championing African Excellence;  
The theme for the celebration  
Boldly written on huge banners,  
Waved at them in the wind.  
But did they understand?*

*How could they understand  
When they were not taught?  
How could they be moved  
When they were not challenged?  
African excellence;  
What is its essence,  
To the taxi or “tro-tro” driver,  
The ordinary worker,  
The individual sons and daughters of the Land?*

*So they came, a huge resource to be harnessed;  
But back home they went dispersed,  
To return to old ways.  
Championing African Excellence,  
Whatever its essence,  
Not registered on their minds;  
Its implications lost on them.  
What an opportunity for a re-awakening,  
What an opportunity missed!"*

I stole another glance at Grandpa as I got to the end of the poem. His eyes were closed, and he had a light smile on his face, as though he was still taking in what I had just finished reading to him. Then, he opened his eyes saying:

“That poem, my son, summarizes the relationship between the state and her citizens.”

“How do you mean exactly, Grandpa?”

“The state, through its governments, shouts high-sounding slogans, with the notion that her citizens will understand and tug along. Sadly, the citizens

don't seem to get what is going on. This is what I sought to bring out in this poem.”

“Ok Grandpa; I get your point now. You are saying that our governments and the people are worlds apart. You made that point clearly at the very beginning of our conversations, and you've expressed it beautifully at the end of your poem.”

“Exactly; I am saying that the state and her citizens are not flowing in the same direction. They are not in sync. This nation has left her citizens far behind in the march towards national development.”

*This nation has left her citizens far behind in the march towards national development*

“Hmmm, I see”

“If this country is to achieve great success, it must work in tandem with her population. The state must get its citizens to understand that they have a part to play in moving the nation forward. That attitude is clearly lacking in this nation and it needs to change.”

“Hmmm, Grandpa”

“You may not know this; but I once travelled with a group to the Mediterranean island of Malta, a...”

“You did, Grandpa? Tell me about it” I interrupted before he could finish his statement.

“It’s a long story my son; let’s focus on our discussion.”

“Ok, grandpa; but you will tell me before I leave, right?”

“Well, if you have the time, why not; I will. But to continue, Malta is a tiny island nation that thrives on tourism.

“I hear so, Grandpa”

“My visit to Malta taught me what it means for a state to be in sync with her citizens.”

“And what exactly did you learn Grandpa?”

“Be patient, I will tell you; our people say ‘Don’t drink the soup before the *fufuo* is ready’.”

“Ok, Grandpa, but I am very eager to know.”

“You see; Malta is made up of two islands. The smaller, northern island is called Gozo, and it’s barely inhabited.”

“I see, Grandpa; so what is special about that place?”

“On this uninhabited island, has been built an underground tunnel in which Maltese history, culture, and industry, are exhibited through a combination of picture, light, and sound.”

“Wow, Grandpa; it must be very exciting.”

“It’s indeed very exciting to be in that tunnel; and I tell you, it’s a major tourist attraction.

“I can imagine”

“Malta is also known for producing fine lace, and one particular town, sadly I have forgotten its name, is famous for making the finest lace on the island.”

“I see.”

“And you know what the people of Malta say to every visitor?”

“What do they say, grandpa?”

“They convey two well-rehearsed messages to every visitor. It’s almost like a song, and it is always on their lips.”

“I see; and what do they say exactly?”

“Have you visited Gozo yet? It's a must-see. Please make time to go there.”

“Oh, they actively promote their main tourist attraction, right?”

“Exactly; and their other ‘song’ is similar: ‘Have you gone to see where the finest lace in the world is made? Don't leave Malta without going there”.

“So, Grandpa; was this done through a promotional campaign on TV or what?”

“No, nothing of that sort, my son; those ‘songs’ were sung by taxi drivers, hotel attendants, shop owners, and shop assistants.”

“By the ordinary Maltese citizens; that’s very interesting.”

“Yes, my son; by the ordinary people. They understand that their country thrives on tourism, and they, the citizens are the promoters and drivers of that tourism. They are in sync with the state.”

“I see what you mean, Grandpa. Sadly, that is lacking in our own country.”

“Yes; and that is one key weakness in our democratic experience. This nation, currently, is completely out of tune with her citizens.”

*This nation, currently, is completely out of  
tune with her citizens*

“I agree”

“Yes, you see, our governments appear to make plans and shout slogans. Sadly, the actual content of those plans is known only to government and public officials, who attend countless meetings and conferences in plush hotels purportedly to promote those plans. The people who are supposed to benefit from the plans know little, and often behave in ways contrary to the objectives intended in those plans.”

“You have a great point there, Grandpa; the majority of our people don’t know where this nation is headed. We wake up daily, listen to the rhetoric of our leaders, and go back to sleep. There is no direction; this nation is adrift; it is headed nowhere.”

*There is no direction; this nation is adrift,  
it is headed nowhere*

“You’ve said it; my son. If this country is to make any significant headway in development, the state and her governments should understand that without the full participation of our peoples, this nation cannot go far.”

*The state and her governments should  
understand that without the full participation  
of our peoples, this nation cannot go far*

“Grandpa, this brings to mind the African proverb which says; ‘if you want to walk fast, walk alone, but if you want to walk far, walk together with others’.”

"Exactly, my son; the state must identify with that philosophy and walk together with her citizens in

order to walk far in her developmental efforts. This nation faces a myriad of problems and, it is only through a synchronized march with her citizens that it can ever hope to solve those problems.”

“I agree Grandpa, but I am wondering how practically this can be done. In which ways can our nation pull the citizens towards development?”

“I will give you one example of how a nation can pull its citizens along the path of development. And that happened right here in this country.”

“Really; and when was this, Grandpa?”

“You remember the late General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong, don’t you?”

“Yes, he was the one who overthrew our second republican government through a coup d’état. I remember him very well Grandpa. It was in the early seventies, and I was in secondary school then.”

“Do you remember that during those times there were severe shortages of food in this country?”

“Yes Grandpa; that was when the term ‘essential commodities’ came into mainstream usage. Those days were difficult for me in school. I couldn’t get toothpaste for two whole terms and had to use an antiseptic solution, called Milton, to brush my teeth. It ended up completely discoloring my teeth”

“You do remember; it was that difficult. But that is where our own good example flows from, my son.”

“You mean something good came out from all those difficulties; how Grandpa?”

“Yes indeed, it was those difficulties that moved General Acheampong and his NRC, to launch the ‘Operation Feed Yourself’ campaign.”

“Ah yes; you are right, Grandpa.”

“Do you remember the slogan for the media campaign, my son?”

“Yes, it was: *‘There is money in the soil, go for it’*; yes that was it.”

“Exactly, my son; with that slogan, the General galvanized the nation in a bold and determined

effort to achieve food self-sufficiency for the country, and stop the reliance on imported food items.”

“I remember that vividly. The population was challenged to grow one kind of food crop or another.”

“And you remember how General Acheampong mobilized university students to construct the canals of two Irrigation dams?”

“Very much so, Grandpa; I remember also that secondary school students, then, agitated to be part of those canal constructions, but they were turned down on account of age.”

“It was the right decision not to allow you to dig canals. You were not strong enough for that kind of work.”

“I disagree, Grandpa. In those days some secondary school students were fathers.”

“But they were in the minority. Even in form two, you were still very tiny; you could not properly hold a spade, let alone dig with it.”

“Yes, but we were excited about the prospect of doing service for our nation, even at those tender ages.”

“Well, back to our story; after those irrigation canals were completed, Acheampong got the locals to plant food crops on the irrigated lands.”

“Yes, I remember that”

“In those times, workers in formal employment worked Mondays to Saturdays.”

“That is true.”

“And you know what General Acheampong did? He took Saturdays off the official working days, and charged every worker to work the land on Saturdays to grow food for consumption.”

“I remember that as well. I think it was his way of getting every person in formal employment to fully participate in the “Operation Feed Yourself” Program.”

“It was, indeed, and our people rose to the call, didn’t they, my son?”

“Yes, they did; it was an overwhelming response. I remember that in no time, gardens started appearing everywhere; along the roads, in backyards of homes and offices, and on empty plots of land. I lived, at that time, with my uncle in a mining town. There was a big golf course where we lived, and you won’t believe it; the golf course was turned into food gardens by the residents, who were senior staff members of the mining company then in operation.”

“That was how successful the campaign was. Did you know that through the Operation Feed Yourself campaign, this country achieved self-sufficiency in food supply for the next few years, and even exported food to neighboring countries?”

“I didn’t know that Grandpa. But I remember that, in my school, we produced our own food for two years. Indeed, our school saved money on food, and used the money saved for some projects in the school.”

“This example, my son, shows only one way in which a nation can pull its citizens along the path of development.”

“I see your point clearly now. I now understand what you mean by ‘the government must pull the people along in national development’. If we are ever going to achieve much, this nation must walk that path; it is the right thing to do. Sadly, we don’t see that happening anymore in this country, Grandpa.”

“You are right, my son; this is not happening anymore. Our leaders have either gone to sleep; or are playing ostrich.

“Sadly so, Grandpa; but that should not continue. So, I repeat my question; in what ways can we pull our people along the development path?”

“In any ways imaginable, my son; especially with respect to the human elements of development”

“Human elements, how do you mean, Grandpa?”

“Tell me, what major problems face this country?”

“Poor roads, insufficient power supply, an erratic economy that never seems to want to take off, poor....”

“Yes, yes, yes, you are right; but those are infrastructural and economic issues; I am talking about problems caused by human behaviour, my son.”

“Ok, in that case, I can say we have problems with sanitation and public hygiene, Grandpa.”

“Exactly; as a people, we are fond of spitting anywhere and everywhere in public, we sneeze and cough without covering our noses and mouths, we urinate anywhere we want, we defecate in open places, and throw our litter everywhere in the open. We have horrible behaviour.”

“Hmmm, you are so right, Grandpa. The other day, a traffic control staff at our main airport was caught on camera urinating on the tarmac.”

“That’s exactly the kind of horrible behaviour I am talking about. But that is not all; our patriotic spirit is dead, and so is our spirit of voluntarism. We treat state property with abandon, and our sense of being one another’s keeper is completely lost.”

But Grandpa; much as I agree with you on those issues, I don’t see how they affect our

development. Isn't it the big issues that really matter?"

"Yes, of course, the big issues do matter; but the human factor costs this nation more money than we can ever imagine. Perhaps, taken together, they become the big issue."

"I don't understand, Grandpa. You need to come clear on this."

"Do you know how much diseases like malaria, typhoid, and cholera cost this nation?"

"I have no idea"

"I will tell you. Malaria is the leading public health problem in this country, and it costs the nation 38 million dollars per year<sup>1</sup>. And human behaviour contributes greatly to the spreading of malaria."

"38 million dollars! Grandpa, that is huge"

"But that is not all. Typhoid and cholera together could cost this nation a similar amount annually, yet these are completely preventable diseases."

“I see your point Grandpa; poor public behaviour catalyzes the transmission of diseases that cost this nation a fortune to treat.”

“That’s the whole point. If we do nothing about our public behaviour, this nation will continue to throw away money she can easily save.”

*If we do nothing about our behaviour, this nation will continue to throw away money she could easily save*

“And that money could be better spent on development.”

“Exactly. So, you see, what you call the small issues are, in reality, the big issues, my son.”

“Ok Grandpa; I think I should allow you to make your point.”

“In that case, let’s look at sanitation and public hygiene: what issues come out from there, my son?”

“I think indiscriminate littering is a common issue, and so is defecating and urinating in open places,

and all the issues you have already mentioned, Grandpa.”

“And why do you think people litter anyhow and defecate in open places?”

“When it comes to littering, I think it’s just our habit; but people defecate and urinate in open places because they have no toilets at home, and no public toilets they can use, Grandpa.”

“That is very true. And how do you think this habit and behaviour of our people can be changed; I guess you agree that such behaviour is not good, my son?”

“Change our behaviour, Grandpa? That will be a tough one.”

“And why do you say that?”

“Who is going to enforce the change? You saw how a campaign by one of our vice presidents fell flat on its face. Grandpa, you are thinking of the impossible.”

“You think so? I disagree, my son. We can develop a better public behaviour, if the state and her governments work closely with the people.”

“And how do you suppose we do that?”

“I will make you answer that question yourself, my son. Tell me concerning our countrymen who live in Europe and America; how do they behave in public? Do they throw their litter anywhere and anyhow?”

“No way; Grandpa, they will not dare do that.”

“And why not; is it only because they could be arrested?”

“No, not necessarily; it is just not done. The system in those countries does not allow such behaviour.”

“Exactly; you mentioned their ‘system’. Now answer me; did that system drop from the skies?”

“No, Grandpa; I think that system has been developed over many years”

“Exactly; it must have been carefully crafted, nurtured, disseminated, and enforced, until it produced the accepted public behaviour among the

citizens. That is the direction our governments must point the citizens in; that's the way to develop acceptable public behaviour."

"But grandpa, that's exactly what our former vice-president sought to do and failed."

"Hahaha, you make me laugh; that was a little more than a lame approach toward changing public behaviour. It was a failure from its very inception because the people were not involved."

"So Grandpa, what is your solution, how can we change this unhealthy public behaviour?"

"But I thought you answered that yourself a while ago. You see, the state and her governments must craft acceptable standards of public behaviour, create systems to translate those standards into norms, and work closely with her citizens to get them to follow those norms through a combination of enforcement and free will."

"But that will be a long-term measure, Grandpa."

"Yes indeed; but how else do you think human behaviour can be changed; in a year or two, or

through shouting slogans only? No, my son, lasting change will require determined and persistent effort, not by one government but, by the state and all her governments.”

“I see. So let’s get into the specifics; how, in practical terms, can this be done?”

“First, the state must define the standards for public behaviour. For example, we can aim for ‘no littering’, ‘no defecating, and no urinating in the open’, or for ‘covering the nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing’. This will only be the first step.”

“Ok, so the standards are set by the state; then what?”

“Then the state must identify what needs to be done to achieve those standards of behaviour, and map out ways for doing those things, including the roles the citizens would need to play.”

“Ok Grandpa; let’s reduce this to the issue of defecating in open places, and develop a system from there. Let’s assume the standard is ‘no defecation in open places’.”

“Ok; in that case, what do you think needs to be done to achieve those standards?”

“I think there should be toilets in every home. There should also be public toilets for people to use when they are not at home.”

“Great, but we have a peculiar problem as a nation. Many people live in uncompleted houses, containers, and kiosks, in the markets, and on the streets. They are forced to defecate in the bushes and open places.”

“Ok; then we should look for ways of providing toilets for those people as well.”

“So, our challenge is to find ways of putting toilets into every home, and providing those who live in kiosks, containers, and uncompleted houses with public toilets, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Grandpa; and that is such a huge challenge.”

“True; but it’s not so huge if we involve the people.”

“Ok, so how do we go about it, Grandpa?”

“First, every district authority must insist that every home or household should have toilets installed in them. In addition, any person who offers rental accommodation should also provide adequate and suitable toilet facilities to occupants.”

“Grandpa the landlords know that, but they don’t do it. Besides, there are so many tenants chasing after a few rental units, and that makes it difficult for tenants to forcefully demand toilet facilities. To insist is to risk ejection. For many tenants, a place to lay the head is the first priority.”

“And that is why the district authorities must ensure that the rights of tenants are defended.”

“But how can the district assemblies do that, Grandpa?”

“The district authority should identify appropriate affordable toilet technologies that can be installed in households, and aggressively promote them to homeowners and landlords.”

“Hmmm, Grandpa; the problem will be how to identify every landlord.”

“Don’t worry; they can be found. To help locate every household without toilet facilities, the district authorities should promote the setting up of ‘sanitation brigades’.”

“Sanitary inspectors?”

“Let me finish; I am talking about something different.”

“Sorry Grandpa; but what will be the functions of these sanitation brigades?”

“Two main functions: first, they will identify households without toilet facilities and, second, they will install toilet facilities in those households with the approval of the district authority.”

“But Grandpa, I see a problem there. You know our people; these sanitation brigades will move about, collect bribes, and let landlords off the hook.”

“No, you are wrong. The sanitation brigades will be private enterprises. They will not be paid by the assemblies. They will have to identify target households and install toilet facilities in them if they are to make a living. It will be in their interest to

identify households that do not have toilet facilities and bring them to the attention of the district authority.”

“Ok, that sounds good to me Grandpa. But how do we ensure that the sanitation brigades do not swindle landlords?”

“No, that will not happen. The sanitation brigades will be registered by the respective district authorities and will receive training in the installation of the appropriate toilet facilities in households. Moreover, landlords will not be paying monies directly to the sanitation brigades.”

“Ok Grandpa; let me get it straight: let’s say that the sanitation brigades have been formed, and have been trained by the assemblies; how do they operate?”

“Each sanitation brigade should be assigned territories in the district. They will then need to find households with no toilet facilities. This they can do easily by speaking with tenants. When they have identified a household without toilet facilities, they will obtain a written permit from the district

authority to install toilet facilities in that household.”

“Ok, Grandpa, how do we ensure that the toilet facilities installed in any household are adequate for the residents?”

“That will be for the district authority to define. There should be a good ratio of tenants to toilet facilities in every household.”

“But Grandpa, how will they get the space for the installation of the toilet facilities?”

“Well, every household or landlord should be required to make space available for the installation of the toilet facilities.”

“Right, let’s say the toilet facilities are installed; then what?”

“Every completed toilet facility will be inspected, and certified as conforming to standard, by a certified inspector of the district. Following that, an invoice will be issued by the district authority to the landlord, for payment directly into a joint account operated by the district authority and the sanitation

brigade. That invoice will be copied to the sanitation brigade. Once payment is made, the assembly will then pay the sanitation brigades after deducting appropriate taxes and levies.”

“Sounds good, Grandpa, but what about equipment? I guess appropriate equipment will be needed.”

“Of course; the sanitation brigades will need appropriate equipment. The district authority can facilitate the acquisition of appropriate equipment for the sanitation brigades.”

“What if a landlord refuses to cooperate with the sanitation brigades?”

“Well, the assemblies have by-laws, and nobody should be above the law. Once they have set a standard to achieve, nobody should be allowed to thwart the achievement of that standard.”

“Great, Grandpa; I especially like the idea of the sanitation brigades. They will be critical to the success of this idea.”

“Exactly”

“Ok, but we still need to find a way to provide toilet facilities for those who live in uncompleted houses, kiosks, containers, and on the streets and slums, Grandpa.”

“Yes, and that is a much greater challenge, and I think this is where public toilets come in.”

“Public toilets? They will not solve anything. They will be so misused that people will abandon them for the open spaces, and then we will be back to square one.”

“Not exactly, if the assemblies become innovative in their approach”

“Innovative; how innovative, Grandpa?”

“They can ensure that every public toilet facility is owned and operated by those who use it.”

*Every public toilet facility should be owned  
and operated by those who use it*

“Hahaha Grandpa, how can slum dwellers own and operate public toilets?”

“You underestimate the power of numbers, my son. Those people are in the hundreds of thousands, and they can achieve a lot even through very small contributions made over time.”

“Grandpa, are you suggesting that those who live in kiosks, containers, uncompleted houses, and slums, should contribute toward the construction of public toilets which they will own and operate?”

“Exactly; and that can be done through a carefully managed process involving the district authority, the various dweller groups, and the sanitation brigades.”

“And what process is that, Grandpa?”

“Every district authority should organize and register such persons into groups, to gain an idea of their numbers. The assemblies should then sensitize the groups on the standards of public behaviour that have been set, the objectives for building the public toilets facilities, and the obligations of the target groups.”

“Hmmm”

“Then, the district authority should facilitate agreements between the dweller groups and the sanitation brigades, regarding the cost of constructing the toilet facilities, and how the groups will pay for them.”

“It looks good Grandpa; but how will these groups pay for the construction of the toilet facilities in practical terms?”

“It’s very possible my son. Leaders of the various groups can collect daily payments from the dwellers, and pay the amounts collected into accounts run jointly by the district authority, the sanitation brigades, and the dweller groups. This can be done for a defined period. Proper records-keeping of payments by dwellers will ensure accountability.”

“And Grandpa, I think the assemblies can help these poor people to raise funds; what do you think?”

I agree; one way would be for the assemblies to match whatever amounts the dweller groups manage to contribute towards the project.”

“Great. So the monies are paid into the account, then what, Grandpa?”

“Once sufficient funds have been raised, the district authority will authorize the sanitation brigade to construct the prescribed toilet facilities for the groups. The district authority will then inspect and commission the completed toilet facilities, and hand them over to the groups to operate and manage.”

But Grandpa, are you assuming that every slum dweller will be involved in this project?

“Yes, but why not? If the district authority collaborates closely with the dweller groups, it can ensure that every street or slum dweller conforms to this arrangement. They can get the leaders of these groups to identify street dwellers who refuse to be part of this arrangement for disciplinary measures to be taken against them.”

“Fine, Grandpa; but I have a question. Those toilets facilities; will they be properly maintained?”

“They should. It should be the responsibility of the district authority to ensure that every one of those

toilet facilities is properly maintained. The authority should provide training in the maintenance of the facilities, and couple that with regular inspection, and the giving of awards. The dweller groups themselves will be motivated to keep those facilities well maintained for a simple reason: if their facilities are well maintained, the operators could earn good revenue by opening up their facilities to the general public, at a fee.”

“Well, Grandpa, if all this can be done, it will bring great relief to the slum, kiosk, container, market, and street dwellers.”

“And that is only one example of what can be achieved if the state and her governments pull the people along with them in the direction of development. The state should begin to see her people as partners in development”

Grandpa, we mentioned other public sanitation issues such as urinating indiscriminately, and sneezing in public; do you want to address those?”

“No, I won’t. But the same principle applies. Do we want our people to cover their noses and mouths

when they sneeze or cough in public? Let standards of behaviour be set, and let the authorities figure out what can be done to achieve the set standards through close collaboration with the people.”

“I guess the same can be said about the plastics menace that has engulfed this nation, Grandpa”

“You are right. Do we want to rid our streets, gutters, soils, rivers, lakes, and beaches of plastic bags, bottles, and cups? The same principle applies. We should not leave our people behind.”

“Grandpa, what about patriotism and national pride; does the principle still apply?”

“Of course, my son; do we want to promote patriotism, national pride, or the spirit of voluntarism? We need to set the standard, identify what must be done to achieve the standard, and involve the people in achieving that standard.”

“Grandpa, it’s now clear to me why we have so many problems that defy solutions. Our governments have done nothing to pull the people along the path of development.”

“That’s my whole point. What makes it all so sad is that an important and powerful resource, which could be exploited to drive the population along the path of development, has been neglected by the state”

“Which resource has the state neglected, Grandpa?”

“I am talking about our chiefs. Together, they constitute one resource that has been neglected in our nation’s developmental effort”

“I don’t understand, Grandpa”

“You don’t? Well, let me show you. Tell me; how do our people regard our chiefs?”

“With respect, generally; though that is fading gradually.”

“You are right; but you cannot deny that our chiefs command great authority over their subjects, can you?”

“I guess you are right, Grandpa”

“Our chiefs hold such powerful sway over our peoples that, at their command, their subjects will rise to whatever cause they direct.”

“That’s very true, Grandpa; there are strong allegiances to our chiefs in our communities; you are right”

“That means that we can make our chiefs the prime movers of certain critical aspects of our development; do you see that?”

“Not really, Grandpa.”

“We have been discussing attitude change among our population, and we realize that our chiefs hold sway over our people; you should make the connection, my son”

Oooh, I understand now; you are suggesting that we should exploit the power of our chiefs toward changing attitudes”

“Exactly”

“And how should we do that, Grandpa?”

“Let’s take the issue of sanitation in the communities; the district assemblies could start a competition among the various towns and villages in their jurisdiction. Let’s call it the “cleanest village/town competition”

“And then what?”

“That competition must have clear criteria to be met, the mode of declaring winners, and the prizes to be won.”

“Uh-huh”

“Who will win those prizes; the chiefs or their village?”

“I think it should be for the village or town.

“And what kind of prizes do you propose?”

“That’s for the assemblies to determine. But prizes should be attractive and have an impact on the communities. Town road improvements, clinics, school buildings, textbooks, school tables and chairs, computers, construction of drains, street lights, et cetera, could be considered as prizes”

“And where do the chiefs come in?”

“The district assembly should make the chiefs the focal point for the competition. The chiefs should lead the efforts of the communities.”

“Ok. So the chiefs will drive the efforts of their people towards winning the competition; is that the idea?”

“Yes; the chiefs will exploit their authority over their peoples, to move them into action, and attract development to their villages”

“But Grandpa; this can only happen in the small towns and villages. I doubt if it will work in the metropolitan areas”

“I don’t agree. It will work in the metropolitan areas as well. But even if this idea produces positive results only in the villages it will be a great move forward, don’t you think so? And if this is made a yearly competition, we should see some great improvements in our villages and towns over time.”

You are right; but is sanitation the only thing chiefs can be involved in?”

“No, no, no, my son; chiefs can play several roles in national development. They can, for example, help to increase the production of food and cash crops, such as cocoa, coffee, and cotton, among others. All we need to do is to engender healthy competition, and provide prizes which will positively impact the towns and villages.”

I see. Are there any other areas chiefs can be the movers of national development?”

“Yes, there are several areas. I can think of getting chiefs to be drivers of national harmony and cohesion through the use of our culture.”

“I don’t get it Grandpa; how do you mean?”

“Are you not aware that there are some unhealthy tribal or ethnic undercurrents in our society?”

“Yes, Grandpa; but it didn’t use to be like that a few decades back. Then, we could laugh at ourselves and move on; but now it is risky to do that. It’s very sad”

“We can change that if we use our chiefs to foster inter-tribal tolerance and understanding”

“And how can they achieve that, Grandpa”

“The state could promote cultural exchange programs amongst the various tribes, with the chiefs as the spearhead. Frequent interactions among our peoples will break down tribal misconceptions and barriers and create mutual respect.”

“That’s an interesting idea, Grandpa”

“I am glad you appreciate this idea. Our chiefs can also help in the administration of justice in the villages. Rather than setting up law courts to deal with misdemeanours, the state should use the palaces to handle such cases. Our chiefs and elders are excellent in settling disputes between persons and families.”

“And that is very significant because magistrate and high courts are often sited far from the villages.”

“You got it, my son; but sadly our chiefs, like all the people, have been left behind in our developmental effort”

“This buttresses the point I made early on Grandpa; our problems defy solutions because our governments have done nothing to pull the people along the path of development.”

“But that should change. The state should begin to work with our people to consistently develop our society. The state should embrace and promote the values of integrity, love for work, pride in honest gain, respect of time, respect of the law, the proper use of money, and proper use of language, among others until they become the mainstream behaviour.”

*The state should embrace and promote the values of integrity, love for work, pride in honest gain, respect of time, respect of the law, proper use of money, and proper use of language, until they become the mainstream behaviour*

“You are right, Grandpa; and that proverb comes to mind again: together we can achieve great things for our country; together we shall walk far.”

END OF PART 7

1. The economic cost of malaria in three sub-Saharan countries, Ghana, Tanzania, and Kenya; The Malaria Journal.  
<http://www.malariajournal.com>